

WASHINGTON, DC - On Thursday, July 24, approximately 64,000 Maryland workers will get a 40 cent raise when the federal minimum wage increases to \$6.55. The current minimum wage in Maryland is \$6.15. The increase is the result of legislation passed by the Democratic-led Congress to gradually bring the new federal minimum wage to \$7.25 by July 2009. As a leader in Congress, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) worked to get the increase passed and fought to have it signed into law.

In Maryland, the 2008 increase combined with a \$.70 boost next year, will mean an additional \$2,200 for a worker putting in 40 hours of work per week for 50 weeks a year. Combined with the rebate stimulus checks sent to taxpayers this spring and an extension of unemployment insurance for workers who have lost their jobs in the economic slowdown, the new minimum wage for millions of workers nationwide will serve as an additional economic stimulus by putting millions of dollars directly into the hands of people who will spend it.

"This minimum wage increase couldn't come at a more critical time for workers or the economy," said Congressman Hoyer. "Rising costs of food, gasoline and health care are pinching the budgets of Maryland's working families. This increase, followed by another raise next year, will help meet the immediate economic challenges facing working families as well as provide an additional boost to help strengthen the overall economy."

Before the new federal minimum wage was enacted last May, previous Republican-led Congresses left the minimum rate of \$5.15 untouched for 11 years-the longest gap between adjustments in history. Inflation and increases in the cost of living resulted in the value of the minimum wage dropping to its lowest point in 50 years. The failure to increase the wage rate was not merely a pay freeze for American workers-but an annual pay cut.

"Increasing the federal minimum wage was a key goal of the new Democratic majority in Congress, which passed the increase as one of its first orders of business and fought to have it signed into law," said Rep. Hoyer. "Our country was built on a promise: that hard work and perseverance are the way to a better life. It's a promise I'm glad the 110th Congress has fought to ensure."

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